

Increase programs offered at UMS S'kan campus – MP

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Vivian

SANDAKAN: Member of Parliament Vivian Wong said that the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) should increase the number of programmes being offered at the Universiti Sabah Malaysia (UMS) Sandakan campus by relocating its Faculty of Science and Natural Resources from Kota Kinabalu to Sandakan.

Previously, Vivian has raised the issue of limited undergraduate programme available for prospective students at the UMS Sandakan campus in the Special Chamber (Kamar Khas) in Parliament last week.

“The UMS Faculty of Sustainable Agriculture at the Sandakan campus was set up at the Sungai Batang Education Hub back in 2006, offering prospective students the options of pursuing bachelor degrees in Crop Production, Horticulture & Landscaping, and Live Stock Production.

“However, after 14 years of operation, the programmes available remain unchanged. This limited option has resulted in under-utilisation of the Sandakan campus which can accommodate 1,000 students at any one time,” said Vivian.

According to her, the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources, currently located at the Kota Kinabalu main campus, offers a variety of programmes such as Conservation Biology,

Aquaculture, Marine Science, International Tropical Forestry, Agroforestry, Wood Technology & Industry, Environmental Science and Natural Parks & Recreational.

It currently has 1,600 students enrolled and 200 staff under its faculty.

In her reply, Minister of Higher Education, Datuk Noraini Ahmad said that up till November 2020, there are a total 396 students at the UMS Sandakan campus, with 341 of them pursuing undergraduate programmes and 55 on post-graduate studies.

Several factors need to be evaluated and studied carefully before any decision on the relocation of the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources can be made.

These factors include the cost of setting up infrastructures and facilities as well as the manpower required to support the new faculty at the Sandakan campus.

However, as a medium and long-term strategy to move in tandem with the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the Ministry is in the processing of introducing new programmes at the Sandakan Campus.

These include Bachelor in Agro-tourism, Diploma in Agriculture as well as Precision Farming to meet the future needs of our country.

"I urge the Minister to consider my proposal earnestly. By relocating the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources to the Sandakan campus, not only can we overcome the limited undergraduate programme available in Sandakan, but it will also complement the niche sectors in Sandakan that meet the strategic needs of the state.

"For example, the Sabah Forestry Department headquarters is located in Sandakan, with various forest research facilities set up in Sepilok, Imbak Canyon, and Deramakot Forest Reserve.

"In addition, with Sandakan's renowned environmental conservation culture through the likes of Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, Borneo Sun Bear Conservation Centre, Rainforest Discovery Centre, Turtle Islands Park and Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, all the above programmes will complement perfectly what Sandakan and Sabah is well-known for," she added.

